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SPECIAL COMMITTEE AGAINST APARTHEID

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 668th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 24 September 1993, at 11.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. GAMBARI (Nigeria)

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The meeting was called to order at 12 noon.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

EXPRESSION OF SYMPATHY FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE ESCALATING POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

2. On the proposal of the Chairman, the members of the Committee observed a minute of silence for the victims of the escalating political violence in South Africa.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

3. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee was meeting not to celebrate the death of apartheid but to reaffirm the international community's commitment to the process of peaceful change towards a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa.

4. In welcoming the President of the African National Congress of South Africa, he noted that Mr. Mandela had over the years not only symbolized the spirit of resistance to racial oppression in South Africa but had also become the moral conscience of the world and the embodiment of the finest in the human spirit in the universal struggle for peace, justice and freedom. In his lifelong struggle for freedom, Mr. Mandela had not only contributed to the elimination of the pillars of apartheid and the advancement of democracy, human rights and social justice in South Africa, but had set an example through his statesmanship that would further the cause of freedom and democracy in other parts of the world.

5. The Committee had consistently striven to ensure that apartheid, which was a crime against humanity and an affront to human dignity, was eradicated and to enable the people of South Africa, through democratic change and on the basis of universal suffrage, to build a new, prosperous and just society. As political leaders of South Africa negotiated the peaceful transformation of an exclusionary system of government into a non-racial and democratic one, the United Nations, and the Special Committee against Apartheid in particular, were committed to providing their full support for the process of transition.

6. The Committee welcomed the results that had been achieved thus far in the negotiations. Those achievements had come at a crucial moment in the history of Africa, a continent which had been subjected to colonization, racism, deprivation and lack of economic progress. He was confident that the peaceful transformation of South Africa into a united, democratic and non-racial society would have a great impact on the democratization and economic development of Africa as a whole.

7. For its part, the international community must continue to closely monitor developments as they unfolded in South Africa. The Committee therefore called upon the States Members of the Organization to walk hand in hand with the oppressed people of South Africa, to the last mile, until they were truly free.

ADDRESS BY MR. NELSON MANDELA, PRESIDENT OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS OF SOUTH AFRICA

8. Mr. MANDELA (President of the African National Congress of South Africa) expressed his gratitude to the Special Committee against Apartheid, to its Chairman and to the United Nations as a whole for inviting him to address the meeting. Together they had travelled a long road to reach a common destination which was the consummation of the yearning of all humankind for human dignity and human fulfilment. The mere existence of the criminal system of apartheid had denied the humanity of all human beings and, in the end, no one of conscience could stand by and do nothing in the search for an end to that crime.

9. He was deeply moved by the fact that, almost from its birth, the United Nations had kept on its agenda the vital question of the liquidation of the system of apartheid and white minority rule in South Africa. Throughout their many years of struggle, the people of South Africa had been greatly inspired and strengthened by the individual and collective action taken by Members of the Organization to end apartheid even as the minority regime took further steps to entrench its illegitimate rule.

10. He was particularly grateful for the measures which the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, the Commonwealth, the Non-Aligned Movement, the European Community and other intergovernmental organizations had taken to isolate apartheid South Africa. Similar initiatives had been taken by individual countries, non-governmental organizations, local communities and even single individuals as their contribution to the unprecedented global effort to deny the apartheid system all international sustenance.

11. That global struggle had finally forced the apartheid regime to concede that the system of white minority rule could no longer be sustained and to enter into negotiations with the genuine representatives of the people of South Africa aimed at transforming the country into a united, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist State. Agreement had been reached on a specific programme for change and the countdown to democracy had finally begun. On 27 April 1994, the people of South Africa, irrespective of gender, race, colour or belief, would join in the historic act of electing a government of their choice.

12. Legislation had already been enacted to create the statutory organs that would guarantee free and fair elections. The creation of those statutory instruments meant that the country would no longer be governed exclusively by a white minority regime. The Transitional Executive Council provided for in the legislation would mark the first ever participation by the majority in the governing of their country and would be the precursor to the Interim Government of National Unity, which would be formed after the elections in April 1994. The legislation also provided for the establishment of an Independent Election Commission and an Independent Broadcasting Authority which would play well-defined roles in ensuring a process of transition leading to the formation of a legitimate and therefore acceptable government.

13. All obstacles had not yet been overcome, however, and the international community must maintain its focus on the transitional process in order to see South Africa through to democracy. Indeed, there were forces representing a minority within the country which sought to deny freedom to the people by resorting to brute force. They derived their strength from the fear, insecurity

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and destabilization which they sought to impose through a campaign of brutal and wanton terrorism. Other forces representing narrow, sectarian interests were also opposed to genuine change. It was critically important that those forces should be made to understand that the international community had the will and the determination to act in concert with the majority of the people of the country to ensure that the long overdue democratic change was not delayed.

14. Apartheid had left a swathe of disaster in its wake. The economy was tottering on the brink of a severe depression and millions of people were without food, jobs or housing. The very fabric of the society was threatened by a process of disintegration characterized by increasing rates of violent crime and the collapse of all social norms. The absence of a legitimate state authority which enjoyed the support of the majority of the people immensely exacerbated the general crisis. The international community must therefore act together to resist any slide towards another Somalia or Bosnia, a development which would have disastrous repercussions far beyond the borders of South Africa.

15. The time had come for the United Nations and the international community as a whole to take stock of the decisive advances already made in order to create the setting for the triumph of democracy in South Africa and to lay the basis for halting the slide to socio-economic disaster. In order to strengthen the forces of democratic change and to help create the necessary conditions for stability and social progress, the international community should also lift all economic sanctions against South Africa. That historic step, which would mark a turning-point in the history of the relations between South Africa and the rest of the world, should be viewed as an act not of isolation but of commitment. The new reality should be treated as an opportunity and a challenge to become engaged with the situation in South Africa in a way that would advance the democratic cause and create the best possible social and economic conditions for its triumph.

16. The Special Committee had led the way in preparing the United Nations and its specialized agencies for the new reality that was the outcome of their common struggle. He wished to appeal to the millions of people across the globe who were organized in the broad non-governmental, anti-apartheid movement to remain involved in the continuing struggle for democracy and all-round development in South Africa. He hoped that both South African and international investors would help to regenerate the South African economy for the benefit of all concerned.

17. Since the people of South Africa had not yet, however, elected a democratic government, it was important that the white minority government which remained in place should not be granted recognition and treated as though it were representative of all the people of South Africa. The Transitional Executive Council provided the appropriate mechanism for such interaction as should take place between South Africa and the international community in the period leading up to the formation of the new government. Countries which had imposed diplomatic sanctions against South Africa could now establish a diplomatic presence in South Africa so as to enhance their capacity to assist the people of the country in the realization of the common objectives.

(Mr. Mandela)

18. With regard to the special sanctions relating to arms, nuclear matters and oil, he wished to urge that the mandatory sanctions be maintained until the new government had been formed. The question of the oil embargo might be left to the discretion of the committee of the General Assembly which was responsible for the enforcement of that particular sanction.

19. He wished further to request that the Security Council should begin consideration of the very important question of how the United Nations should assist in the organization of free and fair elections in South Africa. The important contribution of the United Nations Observer Mission to South Africa, which was helping to deal with the continuing political violence, should also be re-evaluated to ensure that it adequately addressed the problem.

20. He wished, finally, to extend congratulations and good wishes to the Palestine Liberation Organization and to the Government of Israel for the important step which they had taken towards a just and lasting settlement of the Middle East question. He continued to hope that progress would be made towards the just resolution of the outstanding issue of Western Sahara. The United Nations, and especially the Security Council, should leave no stone unturned to end the killing in Angola and to ensure respect for the democratic process. He was encouraged by the steps that had been taken to bring peace to Mozambique and hoped that no new obstacles would emerge to deny the people of that sister country the peace, stability and prosperity which they had sought for so long.

21. The people of South Africa were moved by the selfless solidarity which the international community had extended to them and would not rest until the noble cause that united them all emerged triumphant and a new South Africa fully rejoined the rest of the international community as a country of which all could be proud.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.